

## **What is the Reconciling in Christ Program?**

In 1983, Lutherans Concerned/North America started the RIC Program to recognize Lutheran congregations that welcome lesbian and gay believers. During the 2002 LC/NA Assembly, members took action to include people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the program. The Reconciling in Christ roster includes Lutheran congregations in the U.S. and Canada, synods of the ELCA and ELCIC, Lutheran colleges and other Lutheran organizations, including several synodical Lutheran Youth Organizations.

## **All people are welcome here. Why should we single out gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) people?**

The Reconciling in Christ Program doesn't seek special treatment for GLBT people. The reality is, however, that we live in a time where the voices of fear and ignorance dominate the public discussion on human sexuality issues in our society. Most often these judgmental voices of irrational fear are all that is heard. In fact, Lutherans Concerned continues to learn of Lutheran churches that shun GLBT people. Sometimes even their parents and family are vilified and attacked by church members. As a result, it is assumed by most GLBT people that they are not welcome in any church unless told otherwise. Even a general statement of welcome is heard as really meaning "everybody but me," so it takes a special effort to communicate the same welcome. The RIC Program seeks to make clearer the policy of churches where all people are welcome as full members, regardless of their sexual orientation, their gender identity or that of their children, siblings or friends.

## **How does our congregation become designated as RIC?**

Most groups start the process of consideration by engaging in a study program or series of educational meetings. A congregation joins the program in one of several ways: by having its council approve the Affirmation of Welcome or by having a vote of the whole congregation. Once the Affirmation is adopted, the congregation sends a copy of the Affirmation with a signed letter to the LC/NA Executive Director. When the Affirmation is reviewed and accepted, the congregation will be added to the roster of RIC participants. This roster is carried on our website and is distributed appropriately as a witness to the community and the church at large.

## **What will happen if we participate?**

What you do once the Affirmation is adopted is up to your congregation. Many churches post their Affirmation or include it in their bulletin. Others make an inclusive reference in their advertising or include the RIC Program in their annual budget. When we receive your Affirmation of Welcome we will send you a new resource called "Your Church is RIC: Now What?" a guide full of voluntary inclusive ministry action steps. Experience shows that any changes in your church or group will happen slowly, opening individuals to healing and deep spiritual reconciliation. Perhaps parents with a gay son may finally be able to feel they are not guilty of failure in raising their child. Maybe a closeted lesbian member will bring her partner to church for the first time. A bisexual or transgendered person, hearing of your congregation, may return to church after an absence of many years. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works when we are willing to be an instrument of God's grace.

## **What is the Affirmation of Welcome?**

The single element that is central to the program is the Affirmation of Welcome. It is simple yet powerful in its witness. Any group that adopts it or a similar statement which includes the naming of GLBT people as welcome to full participation is eligible to be designated as Reconciling in Christ after review by Lutherans Concerned. Making the affirmation promotes a publicly inclusive ministry and helps heal the pain of doubt.

For more information about the RIC process, visit our website [www.lcna.org/ric](http://www.lcna.org/ric).